

History of
**Stavanger Friends
Meeting**

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By Malinda A. Thompson

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FRIENDS'
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF
SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

History of Stavanger Friends Meeting

by Malinda A. Thompson

Soren and Anna Olson were married at Salem, Henry county, Iowa, ninth month, 22nd day, 1858.

Soon after their marriage they accepted a proposition to care for the farm and property just west of LeGrand, Iowa, belonging to Thomas W. McCool and his wife. She being a minister of the Gospel, they were intending to make a religious visit to North Carolina. The next year they built a log cabin on a 19 acre tract of land about 100 rods southwest of Quarry, Iowa. Thus Soren and Anna Olson became the first Norwegian settlers in Marshall county.

A monthly meeting was established at LeGrand, known as Westland, opened on the 7th month, 16th day, 1856.

A preparative meeting and a meeting for worship had been kept up previous to the setting up of the monthly meeting at LeGrand, Iowa.

Jeremiah Miles was appointed clerk for the day.

A committee appointed by Pleasant Plain quarterly meeting attended the opening and establishing of a monthly meeting to be held on 4th day preceding the third 7th day in each month and to be known by the name of Westland Monthly Meeting of Friends.

At Westland Monthly Meeting of Friends held 8th month, 17th day, 1859.

Received a certificate of the right of membership of Soren Olson and Anna his wife from Salem Monthly Meeting of Friends dated

6th month, 15th day, 1859, also Thore Heggem produced a certificate of his right of membership from the two month meeting of Friends of Stavanger, in Norway, dated 5th month, 16th day, 1859, he being a recorded minister, which was read and accepted and acknowledged a member with us.

It appears on record of minutes of Westland Monthly Meeting of Friends held 2nd month, 15th day, 1861.

The subject of Westland and its subordinate meetings to be changed to the name of Le Grand being considered was fully united with and the request for a change was directed to be forwarded to the ensuing quarterly meeting. Reports from the quarterly meeting show that meeting united with the change. The quarterly meeting held at Bangor, Iowa.

At a monthly meeting held 6th month, 11th day, 1863, Thore Heggem was the first Norwegian minister to open a concern to visit in the love of the Gospel some of his own country men of Salem and Pleasant Plain Quarterly Meeting. Unity was expressed with him and he was left at liberty to attend there to as best wisdom may direct.

At Westland monthly meeting of Friends held 8th month, 14th day, 1864.

The Norwegian Friends request and indulged meeting to be held at 11 o'clock on 1st and 5th day except in the week of monthly meeting to be opened on 1st day the 21st inst. at some convenient place about 2 miles south of town of LeGrand to be called Stavanger which after a time of consideration was united with, and Samuel Jay William Forquehar and Thomas W. McCool with some women friends to attend the opening of said meeting and also to have the necessary care there of and report. The country was new and called prairie at that time with some new homes.

The meeting grew in number as they were received by certificates from Stavanger Month-

ly Meeting of Friends in Norway most of them were promising young men and women the meetings were still held in homes and in a school house on 1st and 5th days when not interfering with the school.

At LeGrand Monthly Meeting of Friends held 7th month, 12th day, 1865.

Tonnes K. Stangeland and Bertha Olson having informed this meeting of the marriage with each other and nothing to hinder they are left at liberty to accomplish it according to friends order Mathias M. Husaboe and William Forquhar are appointed to attend the marriage with some women friends on the committee.

There was a large meeting for this occasion the meeting and soleminzation was held in LeGrand meeting house.

This was the first couple of Norwegian friends married according to friends order.

At LeGrand monthly meeting held 1st month, 17th day, 1866 Sigbjorn T. Rosdale and Margaret Olson inform this meeting that they intend marriage with each other, as usual a committee appointed in the matter Soren Olson and Samuel Jay are appointed who reported favorable to next meeting and they set at liberty to accomplish their marriage according to friends Order.

At LeGrand Monthly Meeting of Friends held 3rd month, 14th day, 1866.

The Friends constituting Stavanger indulged meeting request the privilege of holding an established meeting for worship to be known by the name of Stavanger and held on first and fifth days of each week except on monthly and preparative weeks which is united with.

At LeGrand Monthly Meeting of Friends held 10th month, 17th day, 1866, the monthly meeting granted Stavanger Friends privilege of holding a preparative meeting to be held on fifth day preceding the monthly meeting

in each month and to be known by the name of Stavanger, which being united with. The following named friends were appointed in conjunction with a like committee of women's meeting to attend the opening of that meeting and report thereon to next meeting, viz, Samuel T. Mote, Benjamin Hammon, Philimon Jones, Thomas Townsend (women friends) Mary Abbot, Elizabeth Allmon, Margaret Hammond and Julia Ann McCool.

Taken from the minutes of LeGrand Monthly Meeting held 10th month, 17th day, 1866. Philmon Jones, clerk.

Stavanger preparative meeting of Friends held 5th month, 9th day, 1867.

The first 4 queries were read and considered and the answers united with the clerk to sign them and forward to the ensuing monthly meeting. This meeting was united in having the general advices read four times a year, viz, in the 2nd, 5th, 8th and 11th months.

Soren Olson, clerk.

There are now 28 members constituting the preparative meeting.

Record shows that Soren Olson served as clerk from 1866 until 8th month, 11th day, 1870.

Christian Gimre, clerk for several years. Ole T. Sawyer named clerk in 8th month, 8th day, 1872 until 1880.

Helge Thompson was appointed clerk in 9th month, 9th day, 1880. The meetings for worship and discipline were all conducted in the Norwegian language.

Stavanger preparative meeting of Friends held 8th month, 6th day, 1874. The tenth answer to number of membership as follows: 21 families, 17 parts of families, a total of 107 members, 57 men and 50 women. There were 12 answers and queries to be answered yearly.

At a monthly meeting held 6th month, 17th day, 1868 another minute was granted Thore Heggem to visit in Gospel love his country-

men residing in Story County and other localities within this state. Soren Olson was willing to accompany Thore Heggem in his prospected visit which was united with and they were left at liberty to do so.

LeGrand monthly meeting of Friends held 5th month, 12th day, 1869.

Our beloved friend Tonnes K. Stangeland, a minister, with whom we have unity, expressed in this meeting that he felt it required of him to visit in the love of the Gospel, all or nearly all the families of LeGrand preparative meeting, as may open for it, with which the meeting unites. He was encouraged to attend there to, as best wisdom may direct. Tonnes K. Stangeland came into the church in early manhood and soon developed a gift in the ministry of high order. He was always ready to take his place in all enterprises where it meant hard work and exposure to reach distant places of service. To the regret of the whole church he emigrated to America at a time when his service seemed to be most needed and when his talent could be utilized to the best advantage. The meeting in Stavanger was shorn of much of its strength when he left, but Norway's loss was America's gain and he became an honored and beloved pillar in the church for a number of years and died in the prime of life. It was a sad day for the Norway Friends, when Mathias Huseboe and family left for America and the most promising young minister, Tonnes Stangeland also came. They settled near LeGrand, Iowa, soon afterwards the crown of Lindly M. Hoag's labors. When the friends constituting the meeting at Roldal nearly all left in a company of about 50, who landed at LeGrand station in 1869. Most all of these became members of Stavanger meeting among these were Knud Botnen, Lars Botnen, Mons Vinje, John Rinden, Blind Ellen Botnen, who was blind since childhood, yet was well posted in the Bible and able to compose poetry. She lived to be 80

years old, and was a true mother in Israel. John and Ole Olson, Tormod Thompson, Gulick Medhus and others having families growing up.

Stavanger preparative meeting of Friends held 1st month, 12th day, 1871.

Peter Tjosem and Thore Heggem offer to give one acre of land for burial ground, one-half acre each, describing where it lay, being the present cemetery, with which this meeting unites.

Stavanger preparative meeting of Friends held 11th month, 6th day, 1884.

This meeting belonged to LeGrand monthly meeting, but when that body allied itself with the progressive meeting, many of the members withdrew. Just a few were left who stayed by LeGrand monthly meeting.

Stavanger preparative meeting of Friends held 7th month, 9th day, 1885.

Having at a previous meeting, become united we sent in to our next monthly meeting a request to lay down this preparative meeting, on account of our membership being so small.

We have this day received a minute from LeGrand monthly meeting granting our request to discontinue. Stavanger preparative meeting and this meeting is layed down. The meeting concludes. Lars Peterson, clerk.

In consequence of the many deviations, both in principles and practice, from the doctrine of the Christian religion as we understand them, and as held by the founders of our society, we have felt constrained to separate ourselves from those who claim the name of Friends and who have assumed the control of society and the affairs of the church, and especially so as we cannot cherish any hope that there will be a return to first principles on the part of those who have deviated.

Thus finding ourselves outside of any church organization, and knowing both from individual

experience and from accounts left upon record for our help and instruction, that it has been of great advantage and help to believe in all ages, to be united in an outward as well as an inward bond of fellowship, it is therefore the aim of those whose names are here attached to reorganize into a monthly meeting to be known by the name of Stavanger monthly meeting of Friends. We adopted the discipline of Iowa yearly meeting of Friends held at North Branch, Iowa, with a view to ultimately uniting with or becoming a part of said meeting, with fervent desires both for ourselves and one another that the great Shepherd of Israel may be pleased to preserve us in the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

The 28 names attached to this organization are: Ole Tostenson, Knud K. Botnen, John B. Olson, Jorgen Enge, Ole B. Olson, Mons K. Vinje, Ole T. Sawyer, Thomas T. Strand, Jacob Halvorson, Peter T. Tjosem, Gullick O. Hedhus, John P. Sunde, Helge Thompson, Sidwell Heald, Able Walker, Thore O. Sawyer, John Knudson, Sigbjorn T. Rosdale, Seri Noland, Margreta Olson, Ingbor Vinje, Hellen Sawyer, Margreta Botnen, Anna Strand, Gonne Medhus, Herriet Heald, Martha Knudson, Eli K. Botnen.

Sidwell Heald and Ole T. Sawyer, clerks.

Of this meeting at Stavanger meeting house, Marshall County, Iowa, 5th month, 2nd day, 1885.

Stavanger Monthly Meeting of Friends held 8th month, 1st day, 1885.

The answer to the 12th query is as follows: 12 families, 11 parts of families, total membership 45.

Several requests for membership were received each year increasing our number and we believe our strength.

All meetings held in the American language, some preaching in the Norwegian language.

Stavanger Monthly Meeting of Friends held 6th month, 6th day, 1885.

Ole T. Sawyer and Sidwell Heald were appointed clerks, who served in that station many years. Helge Thompson for Recorder of Births and deaths and Jorgen Enge for treasurer.

The mens' and womens' meetings for business were held jointly.

At the meeting there were appointed overseers viz.: Mons K. Vinje, Ole B. Olson, John P. Sunde, Gonne Medhus, Anna Strand and Hellen Sawyer.

Amongst the Monthly Meeting clerks during these years were Ole T. Sawyer, Sidwell Heald, Malinda A. Thompson, Ole C. Stangeland and others. Of the teachers of a thriving Friends School about this time were Joseph Coppock, Anna Yokum, Lorena Starbuck, several terms, and others. Superintendents, Jesse and Rachel Negus, Robert and Anna Hampton Tilman and Sarahetta Patterson, Nichols and Lydia Larson served many years.

Stavanger Monthly Meeting of Friends held 8th month, 1st day, 1885.

This meeting made a request to be attached to Springdale quarterly meeting of Friends to be held at West Branch, Iowa.

Stavanger Monthly Meeting of Friends held 9th month, 5th day, 1885.

Received a minute from Sprindale Quarter as follows:

A request, from Stavanger Monthly Meeting of Friends held in Marshall County, Iowa, to be united to Springdale Quarterly Meeting of Friends held in Cedar County, Iowa, has been received and read at this time, in joint session, which after being weightily considered, this meeting very cordially accepts and receives said Monthly Meeting as a compact part of this Quarterly Meeting.

Stavanger Monthly Meeting will be expected here after to make regular reports to this meeting. Taken from the minutes of Springdale Quarterly Meeting of Friends held at West Branch, Cedar County, Iowa, 8 month, 15th day, 1885. Tristram Coggeshall, clerk, Leah Paxton, clerk for the day.

Stavanger Monthly Meeting of Friends held 5th month, 1st day, 1886.

The subject of first day scripture school being introduced and a committee appointed to have the care of them the ensuing year. David D. McGrew, Ole H. Bryngelson, Ole T. Sawyer, Anna T. Tostenson and Mary H. Roberts are directed to report in tenth month also in fifth month next year.

Stavanger Monthly Meeting of Friends held 7th month, 3rd day, 1886.

The committee to propose to this meeting three friends for trustees of the burying ground at this place, offer the following, viz., Sigbjorn T. Rosdale, Christian Gimre and Ole H. Bryngelson, who were united with and were appointed accordingly.

Stavanger Monthly Meeting of Friends held 8th month, 1st day, 1885.

The queries were all read in this meeting showing the 12th answer to be 12 families, 11 parts of families, total membership 45.

Stavanger Monthly Meeting of Friends held 2nd month, 4th day, 1885.

We find on record a minute which is as follows: As it has pleased our Heavenly Father to remove by death our dear friend Tonnes K. Stangeland, who has so satisfactorily sat at the head of our meetings and had the timing of same, a committee was appointed to confer together and propose to next meeting the name of a friend for this service. The report of the committee is that Ole T. Sawyer be appointed to take the seat of our deceased friend Tonnes K. Stangeland, which was united with.

Ole T. Sawyer sat at the head of the meeting until he was removed by death which took place 4th month, 19th day, 1913.

After that Ole H. Bryngelson was appointed for the same service as the foregoing.

In 11th month, 3rd day, 1888. The subject of a Friend's School at this place for the education of our youth under care of Friends. Ole Tostenson, Ole T. Sawyer, David D. McGrew, Oliver E. Shayer and Sigbjorn T Rosedale, were appointed as a committee to have care of the subject. After several conferences during the year the subject was sent to the yearly meeting.

Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends held in the year 1889, at West Branch, Iowa.

A committee was appointed to solicit subscribers and to aid Friends at Stavanger in starting a boarding school at that place and also to have a general care and charge of the whole subject connected with it. The names are Tristram Coggeshall, Archibald Crosbie, Ole T. Sawyer, Hellen Sawyer, Minerva Harvey, Ole Tostenson, Anna Strand, Thomas Strand, Malinda A. Thompson, David Mills, Isabel Thomas, James Pickard, Margaret Ann Tomlinson, Anna Olson, Clarkson T. Penrose, Rachel E. Negus, Deborah Standing and John Knudson. In 1891 this edifice was erected as it stands today and a school was opened in the fall of 1891, with Anna Yokum, teacher, and only a few students the winter term of four months. Joseph Coppock was principal and Anna Yokum teacher, Jesse and Rachel Negus, superintendent and matron with a total enrollment of 46 scholars, this report being entirely satisfactory and accepted to the yearly meeting. The boarding school was carried on as such until the 1911 and 1912 followed by three years of day school.

Stavenger Monthly Meeting of Friends held 12th month, 3rd day, 1892. This meeting is informed that Friends at or near Norway, Iowa,

Station, Benton County, request an indulged meeting, this meeting unites in granting the request, and directs that the meeting be held at 11 o'clock on each 1st day. As a committee to have care of such meeting we appoint Mons K. Vinje, Sigbjorn T. Rosdale, John Knudson, Ole T. Sawyer, Gonne Medhus, Anna Enge, and Martha Knudson and this committee is directed to report to this meeting every three months.

Elders have been appointed by West Branch Quarterly Meeting of Ministers and Elders and met with that body heretofore. The ministers and elders of Stavanger Monthly Meeting having been directed by their monthly meeting and in compliance with discipline, organized as a preparative meeting of ministers and elders this 12th day of 5th month, 1894. The names are Ole T. Sawyer, Hellen Sawyer, Sigbjorn T. Rosedale, Anna T. Tostenson, John Knudson, Martha Knudson, Mathias M. Husboe. These, except Anna T. Tostenson, have all been called, we trust from works to reward.

In the year 1886 the present meeting house was built almost as it stands today.

For a number of years the house was well filled. Many times on common meeting days extra benches and chairs had to be placed in the aisles, for a great many non-members attended almost as regularly as some of the members. One by one they have moved away or for other reasons have severed their membership.

“One by one the seats stand vacant
That were filled by those we loved.
One by one the seats are filling,
In the Father home above.

The dear people who once held so steadfastly to these principles have passed on and the effect of their lives on those with whom they came in contact will ever be felt.





